

EI-515

JAMES CONNELLY

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD

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IRELAND, 1920

AGE 20

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PORT:

RESIDENCES:

- **IRELAND: NEWRY, COUNTY DOWN; BELFAST, N. IRELAND**
- **ENGLAND: MANCHESTER**
- **US: NEW YORK, NY; SAYVILLE, LONG ISLAND, NY**

LEVINE: Okay. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here today in Sayville, Long Island, at the Petite Fleur Nursing home.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: I'm here with James Connelly, who was, uh, who came in 1920.

CONNELLY: I th-- I'm pretty sure it's that. If it isn't, it was in around that time, in the 1920's.

LEVINE: Okay. You think it's 1920.

CONNELLY: Yeah. 1920, yeah.

LEVINE: And we think that Mr. Connelly was twenty years old.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. And, um, I just want to say that I'm delighted to have found you here, and I look forward to whatever you remember about coming to this country. Tell me first your birth date for the tape.

CONNELLY: Uh, April 24, 1900.

LEVINE: And where in Ireland were you born?

CONNELLY: I was born in a little town called Newry.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

CONNELLY: N-E-W-R-Y.

LEVINE: Newry. And what part of Ireland is that?

CONNELLY: It's in the north.

LEVINE: In the north.

CONNELLY: It's right on the border of the south and the north. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What, um . . .

CONNELLY: Of County Louth and County Down.

LEVINE: County, say the counties again?

CONNELLY: Uh, County Down, and County Louth. I think it's County Louth runs next to it.

LEVINE: Okay.

CONNELLY: And I was born right on the border there. But Newry is a border town.

LEVINE: I see. So it's the border between County Down?

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: And County?

CONNELLY: And, Louth, and County Down. It's right on the border there, but it's in

the, in the north. You know?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONNELLY: So, uh . . .

LEVINE: What do you remember about the little town?

CONNELLY: I don't, well, I don't --- don't know. I come over here, I think it was, I come over to Ireland --- well, over to England, and, uh, I think it was Nine-- 1914 or 1915, I'm not sure.

LEVINE: I see. So you left Ireland four or five years, or five or so years before you came to the United States.

CONNELLY: Yeah. That's right, yeah.

LEVINE: I see. Well, then, first let's just talk about that time up until you were about fourteen years old.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: When you were living in the little border town.

CONNELLY: In the north, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh, what was the town like?

CONNELLY: It was the nice, a very nice little town, where they made all ---
manufactured linen, or manufactured materials for making the linen, you
know, in the north. At that time, the north was a great linen place where
they manufactured linens. (He coughs)

LEVINE: Did you work in the manufacturing?

CONNELLY: No, I never, no, I was too young. I was going to school. But after tha--
after school, after that I, about 19, I don't know, '14 or '15, or something
like that, I got out of school.

LEVINE: I see.

CONNELLY: You know. So I had an uncle--- I have an uncle, he's an Englishman.
He's married to my mother's sister. So they sent me over to him, and he
was, uh, working the British, the British Westinghouse, in Manchester.
It's a, and, uh, he worked on the test bed there, as far as I remember.
So he got me into the British Westinghouse.

LEVINE: I see. Well, before you left, when you were in school.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: What was school like? What do you remember when you think back
to your school days?

CONNELLY: Oh, it was good. I liked it.

LEVINE: Yeah?

CONNELLY: Yeah. It was the Christian Brothers School.

LEVINE: Christian Brothers?

CONNELLY: Yeah, the Christian Brothers School. And I went through all this, they had a number of different schools, you know, and I went through the different schools. Like, more or less the grades that you have here. (He coughs) Excuse me. I --- but I --- I got a cold this last couple of days. Yeah.

LEVINE: So, uh, were you, were you a religious family?

CONNELLY: Yeah, very.

LEVINE: How did you observe? What did the family do?

CONNELLY: Well, my father, he was brought --- his father, my grandfather, he was a builder, a stonemason. And that's, my father was more or less brought up in that but when he was young. But he went through England, and he worked in England, and he also went to school there, in Manchester. And he studied the --- sanitation, because the town that we were in was very unsanitary at that time, you know?

LEVINE: In what ways?

CONNELLY: Well, like, for instance, most of the houses didn't have toilets or noth--- you had that, the dry toilets, you know? So, uh, they put in all, they made it up-to-date their own sewage in, and stuff like that. So he was the inspector for, yeah. And that's what he . . .

LEVINE: So he learned that in England, and he come back to . . .

CONNELLY: Yeah, he learned that in England, and he come back to Ireland. And, of course, he was, like, the job, he could go to any place in Ireland or England for that matter, because sanitation was just comin' in, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah. What was your father's name?

CONNELLY: James.

LEVINE: Oh, James.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Were you the oldest child?

CONNELLY: Yeah, yeah. I had another brother a little younger, a couple of years younger.

LEVINE: What was his name?

CONNELLY: Uh, William.

LEVINE: William.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. So, um, well, talking about religion, were you a Catholic family?

CONNELLY: Catholic, yeah.

LEVINE: And, um, do you remember any, uh, Catholic, uh . . .

VOICE: Who is that there?

LEVINE: Mr. Connelly, James Connelly.

VOICE: Oh, Connelly, I can't see his face. Okay.

LEVINE: Do you remember any, like, ceremonies, or any religious occasions that were celebrated when you were little?

CONNELLY: Well, my hometown was mostly Catholic. The majority was Catholic.

LEVINE: And was the Christian, uh, school . . .

CONNELLY: And the Christian Brothers schools were all religious schools, you know, run by, run by . . .

LEVINE: They were Catholic.

CONNELLY: Run by, yeah, run by the Christian Brothers in Ireland at that time. In fact, that's what most of the schools in Ireland were, down in the southern part. Like, in the northern part you had the, the government, or more or less what they called the Protestant schools, you know? They were supported by the government. But the Christian Brothers were supported by the people. You know?

[Public address announcement]

LEVINE: By the church?

CONNELLY: Yeah, no, by the people, the people in the town.

LEVINE: Who went there?

CONNELLY: Yeah, the people of the town.

LEVINE: I see.

CONNELLY: Took up, you know, they had everything --- so they arranged, I don't know what ---like different things, for the Christian Brothers, you know? And they were --- I don't remember --- maybe the church helped to

support them, too, you know?

LEVINE: What kind, what kind of an education did you get there?

CONNELLY: A very good, very good. Yeah.

LEVINE: Was there anything in particular that you liked about school?

CONNELLY: Oh, yeah. I liked, I liked drawing, mathematics and stuff like that, you know? In fact, that's what I would like to have been, you know? Because when I come out of ---- I spent, as I told you, I was in the Britain -- oh I did'n---st --- to mention that I was in the British Army when I was England -- in England, you know? I was in the British Army towards the end of the war, 1918, and I was still working in England. So anybody that had, like us, came from -- from Ireland, if we wanted to, we could go back home to Ireland, or we could join the British army, whenever you were eligible, you know? So I went into the British Air Force.

LEVINE: I see. How did you feel about the British, seeing . . ?

CONNELLY: Very nice. I liked them.

LEVINE: You did.

CONNELLY: Yeah. That's where I would have settled, I would rather have settled in England.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONNELLY: Yeah, because I liked the English people. Course – well, of course, I had an English grandmother, too, you know? So --

LEVINE: Oh, that's right.

CONNELLY: Yeah. So, I mean, --- see, a lot of my people are more or less connected with the Manchester people, you know?

LEVINE: I see, I see. Did you have grandparents in Ireland?

CONNELLY: Whom have --?

LEVINE: Did you have any grandparents that lived in Ireland, not the Manchester grandparents?

CONNELLY: Oh, yeah, father and mother. My father and mother and my grandmother.

LEVINE: Which grandmother was that?

CONNELLY: My mother's mother.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you see much of her?

CONNELLY: Yeah, I seen a lot of her.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: What kind of a lady was she?

CONNELLY: Beau-- beautiful woman.

LEVINE: Yeah?

CONNELLY: Beautiful old lady.

LEVINE: Tell me about her.

[Sporadic public address announcements in background]

CONNELLY: Very religious, you know? Very religious. She was in her, eighty --- eighty years old, and she used to walk on a Sunday, the -- when our son --- said -- her son was a farmer, you know, they were farmers. And instead of taking him away from the farm on a Sunday, you know, because time meant so much to them when the crops were in, you know, and they had to take the crops in, and to bother him on a time like that, she would walk into church about three miles into the church in the town to go to Mass on a Sunday, you know? So I remember her well. She was a, we were both very close, yeah. My grandmother. Because I

used to spend a lot of time in the country, and I liked, I liked that, I liked the country life, you know?

LEVINE: Tell me some experiences you remember with your grandmother. When you think back about your grandmother, what are the, are there any events or any occasions that come to your mind?

CONNELLY: Not really, no, not really.

LEVINE: Did she ever tell you stories, or ---[a staff worker at the nursing home interrupts the interview]---

STAFFER: [not understood] Loretta Quinn?

LEVINE: Me?

STAFFER: Oh, you know what? Are you the urologist?

LEVINE: No.

STAFFER: Oh, I'm sorry.

CONNELLY: Well, you know . . .

STAFFER: [interposed] [not understood]

CONNELLY: [Laughs] Well --- I -- well --you know how the English and Irish question

was at that time --- was pretty bad, you know?

LEVINE: That's what I was wondering about.

CONNELLY: Yeah. And that and –

LEVINE: How you felt. . .

CONNELLY: Yeah. And that, and that ---Yeah. It was pretty bad in Ireland. And they --- they were building the Titanic.

LEVINE: Oh. Were you aware of that?

CONNELLY: And – and ---and ---yeah, in 1912, around 19, way back when I was a kid, I remember that. Because I remember saying to me, she said to me one time in the country, she said, "That ship will never make America."

LEVINE: [Laughs]

CONNELLY: You know. I still remember. It means ---that's the way they were at that time, you know? Because of the bitterness between them.

LEVINE: I see.

CONNELLY: The Catholic ---

LEVINE: The English were building it.

CONNELLY: No, the Catholics and the Protestants.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah.

CONNELLY: That was strongly Protestant, and then the north, especially Belfast, and it was what was called the Orange. The un--- yet, I mean to say when you get to know them, and they haven't been a kid and living next door to them there when you're a kid, you never think of that, and they're all nice people, all of them. I mean, even Keith Hebruth [ph]. [Laughs] Yeah, the – oh ---very nice people, you know? So, uh, I have nothing bad to say about them in any way, you know?

LEVINE: So you have nothing bad to say about the Protestants

CONNELLY: No, that's what I say.

LEVINE: [superposed] and nothing bad to say about the English.

CONNELLY: Yeah, nothing bad, no, nothing bad to say about either of them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONNELLY: Yeah. There were --- I mean to say, I know the British government was pretty rough on Ireland, you know? But the people were nice, and the, the Protestant people, you know, a lot of them on one side were really bitter. The majority of them were very nice people, you know? Very nice

people. And we never were allowed to hold any bitterness, you know, against them.

LEVINE: Who wouldn't allow it?

CONNELLY: My family, my family would never allow us to, you know, engage in any of the Troubles, and my father never believed in it either, you know?

LEVINE: Can you remember any attitudes or ideas that your mother and father tried to instill in you about, uh, people, or . . .

CONNELLY: Yeah. That's --- yeah --that's one ---- that's one of the things they --- they probably instilled in us, not to hold any bitterness, or, to be nasty or anything like that, you know? And when we were kids, that's how we were brought up, not to have any of that bigotry or stuff interfere with our lives, you know? And my father was the same, you know? Of course, he was the town inspector, a sanitary officer. So, I mean, so he couldn't engage in anything like that, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. It sounds like your father had a fairly high position?

CONNELLY: Well, it was, yeah.

LEVINE: A good position.

CONNELLY: It was a good position, yeah. Yeah. Because he studied in Eng—in England, and he could have went to other towns. In fact, he could have

went to England. He was offered a couple of jobs in England, you know?

In the same line of work, you know, sanitary work. But he -- this was his hometown, and he would have liked to see it cleaned up, you know, and nice, you know. Because, you know, there was an awful lot of were -- these, uh, farmers, a lot of the farmers who supplied, like, say, milk and stuff like that to the towns, and even butter and eggs and stuff like that, and it used to be in a very unsanitary condition.

Well, his job was to go into the marketplace and if they had eggs that weren't clean, you know, he'd give them a summons, or if they had milk that was watered that they were bringing into town, if he took samples of them and had it tested and it was below the level, you know, the weak level, you know, with water in it, he would issue a summons to them, you know, things like that that he had to do, you know? Or if he went into any place where they had, where they kept cows, you know, in the town, which some of them did at that time. They kept cattle in the town and supplied people, people around, with milk. And if he went into a place like that where they didn't have sanitary conditions, sanitary conditions for the milk, to keep the milk, they would issue summonses, you know? So that was, that was what his job was, you know? Yeah.

LEVINE: So was he doing that in Ireland before you left for England?

CONNELLY: Yeah, in Ireland, yeah, he was there. He was still on the job in Ireland before I, when I left for England.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did you ever hear about, I know one of the things that's often said

about the Irish in Ireland is this idea of, uh, mystical things.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: You know, uh . . .

CONNELLY: Oh, yeah, did they believe in this?

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONNELLY: Yeah, sure.

LEVINE: Did you, did you have anything to do with that kind of thinking when you were in Ireland?

CONNELLY: Eh, no. I heard about them, but, uh, as I say, my people, they were pretty broad-minded, you know? My mother, she was a dressmaker, yeah, a good one, too, you know? She made a living at it.

LEVINE: Did she make your clothing?

CONNELLY: What? Yeah. She could make clothes better than any of the tailors could make them, for me, you know? And when I was a little older I would -- never wanted her to stop making my clothes. [Laughs] Well, I didn't like the tailors. The tailor would make the pants for me way too big, you know? And stuff like that.

LEVINE: So she would make pants?

CONNELLY: And she would make anything.

LEVINE: Anything.

CONNELLY: Anything. She was an artist, you know? Yep. She was really, really very good.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So about the mystical aspects of life . . .

CONNELLY: Yeah?

LEVINE: Did your mother and father think that that was . . . ?

CONNELLY: Yeah, they didn't . . .

LEVINE: They didn't think . . .

CONNELLY: Think too much about it.

LEVINE: They didn't think too much of it.

CONNELLY: No.

LEVINE: Okay. So now tell me about the next phase, when you were fourteen or fifteen and you left for England.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Why was it that you went to England?

CONNELLY: Well, well, at that time the war was on, you know? And you couldn't leave there to come here, you know. Or probably I could have. I don't, I never tried. But I was working in England, and I liked England. I figured on settling there, you know. I didn't figure there – figure on leaving there. But, uh, I got into the British Westinghouse, and I was working there, you know. My uncle was working on turbine, steam turbine erection, which was a new, you know, thing at that time. Steam turbines had just come on the market, you know. So, uh, he figured that that would be a good trade to come up in, you know? He was building the steam turbines, and it would be a good thing for me to start at, so I did. But it was broken, uh, with the end of the w-- coming on near the end of the war, and we had, but the war was still on, you know?

LEVINE: But when you went in, you went in the British Air Force?

CONNELLY: Into the Air Force, yeah.

LEVINE: What, did you, when did you go in there?

CONNELLY: It must have been, in 1918.

LEVINE: I see. So you were working on the turbines at Westinghouse.

CONNELLY: While I was ----yeah, in England, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then you went into the English . . .

CONNELLY: And then I went home to Ireland, and there they were, uh, like, they were advertising about the Air Force, this country here had loaned them so many millions of money, you know, and they were building their Air Force. So they started building schools over in England, and I joined the British Air Force. They took me over to England and put me in a school. So I was in the school until after the war, you know.

LEVINE: I see. So then, uh, where were you when you decided to come here.

CONNELLY: I was in Ireland.

LEVINE: You were in Ireland.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: You were back in Ireland.

CONNELLY: Yeah, because there was nothing, there was no work, nothing, after the war, you know. And I, of course, I didn't really try to get back to England where the workshops was, they were layin' off thousands of people, you know?

LEVINE: So when did you get it in your mind to come here then?

CONNELLY: Yeah, it was, well, what I really got in my mind was when I was in Ireland and through the, uh, the government, I went to school over there again, you know? I had enough schooling in Belfast. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: What were you studying at that time?

CONNELLY: Uh, engineering, yeah. Steam engineering. (He coughs) And then it was, I was up in my nineteens, you know. And then I decided I would like to, you weren't doing nothing, all you were doing was collecting the dole, you know, at that time. I don't know if you know what that means.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONNELLY: Yeah, you know? (He coughs) And, uh, I decided I'd go to Australia, you know, because I wanted to go to Australia in the worst way, you know?

LEVINE: Why did you want to go somewhere?

CONNELLY: Because I had another ---- had another uncle that had come from this country, and he came over to his home at the time. And when they spoke to him, he said Australia. They only raise sheep in Australia. [Laughs] So he was stupid. I know he didn't know any better.

LEVINE: Okay.

CONNELLY: But uh, so my parents they were, "Well, you can't go there, then, you might as well go there," -- go to -- come to this country. And he was coming back here, you know. I come back with him. But I never seen much of him afterwards.

LEVINE: So you traveled with that uncle to this country?

CONNELLY: Yeah, not with him, with some, some other people that were coming back here, I traveled with them. But it was him that, uh, brought me, or, rather, took me off the Ellis Island, you know?

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

CONNELLY: You know, and he got me a room.

LEVINE: I see. So, so do you remember leaving home to come here?

CONNELLY: Oh, yeah, sure.

LEVINE: And where did you leave from?

CONNELLY: From I-- from, uh, Newry.-- Newry.

LEVINE: I mean, what port did you leave from?

CONNELLY: Oh, gee, let me see now if I can remember now. I know I come over to

England and to, on the, we come over --- we got on the ship in England, one of the, oh, gee, I forget now what the --- . Uh, I'm trying to even think of the line, what line it was.

LEVINE: You said, I think, the Cunard Line.

CONNELLY: The Cunard Line. Yeah, I think it was one of the Cunard lines.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you have examinations before you came?

CONNELLY: Yep. An examination in England, an examination again on the ship, an examination again on Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And was there anything eventful about the voyage from, uh . . .

CONNELLY: Not, no, not really that I remember, no. I couldn't remember that.

LEVINE: Okay. And do you remember coming into the New York Harbor?

CONNELLY: Oh, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

CONNELLY: The statue, oh, yeah, sure. Everybody was, gets up on the deck to see the Statue of Liberty, you know?

LEVINE: Did you know what it was?

CONNELLY: Yeah, sure. Yeah. Yeah. You were told way ahead of time, you know?

LEVINE: And, uh, how about Ellis Island? What do you remember about that place?

CONNELLY: It was kind of rough. Hmm. It was a rough place to be. (He coughs) I know the way ---- the way you, they had you there, and I had a nice, blue suit on, you know, a blue serge suit on, and I remember they were sending you over in bunches, and the guy comes up and puts a big chalk mark on my suit, you know? Oh, and I was so mad. My suit! Mortified. [Laughs] Because I thought, that blue suit, you know, blue serge suit. And he marks the marks all over it. Yeah.

LEVINE: What did that mark mean?

CONNELLY: Well, they were putting you into, separatin' you, you know? So many here for to go so, and so many to go certain places, you know? Honestly I don't even remember half, you know, more than that.

LEVINE: Did they, did they find something wrong with you?

CONNELLY: No,

LEVINE: That was the trouble with you?

CONNELLY: no, no.

LEVINE: No?

CONNELLY: Went sailing through the doctors. Yep.

LEVINE: Okay. So then, uh, did you stay overnight at Ellis Island?

CONNELLY: Uh, no, I don't think so. I think we were, when we got up in the morning on the ship, we packed up and come over onto the boats and over to Ellis Island, and then all the routine in Ellis Is---. I don't remember. I was dizzy.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONNELLY: Yeah. You know.

LEVINE: A lot of people?

CONNELLY: Oh, sure. Polish people, people, Slavish people, from all over Europe, you know. Gee, I'm telling you, some crowd.

LEVINE: So, now, it was this uncle who met you, then?

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did he come to Ellis Island?

CONNELLY: Yeah, he come over then during the day. He come over to Ellis Island, and [not understood] he didn't come over to Ellis Island, I don't think so. I think he waited down in South F -- down at the -- South Ferry, I think at that time. It was all [public address] -- it was all open. It wasn't built up like what it is today, you know?

LEVINE: So when you saw your uncle, then, where did you go?

CONNELLY: Well, uh, over to where he had a room, you know.

LEVINE: Where was that?

CONNELLY: Oh, gee, I don't know. I don't really remember, because I wasn't there long.

LEVINE: Where did you go, where did, what happened? You stayed with him a little while?

CONNELLY: Yeah, yeah. Gee, I don't remember how many, how long, or what the, what it was. But I know that he was -- he sent me to a friend of his that was, uh, a foreman or something up at St. Luke's Hospital in New York City. That's way up on Morningside Drive, and I got a job up there.

LEVINE: What kind of a job did you get?

CONNELLY: A porter's job, painting the floor. At night, you know. Lucky you got a job up there at night, because it fitted right into me. It fitted right into me

because when you work nights you get a separate room up on the roof, and so you have your own room up on the roof. You know? Which was nice, you know? And at night then you could, when you get up at twelve o'clock and come down to work you come down, and you go in, they had a little dining room in there where the rest of, some of the other help and different that worked in the bui---- in the hospital, or -- and you got your -- your something to eat, you know? And, uh, you go downstairs to go to work.

LEVINE: So how long did you stay there?

CONNELLY: Oh, gee, quite a few months, I think, I remember. I'd say for a number, it was coming on towards the end of the winter. It was in the fall, I know that. I'm pretty sure of that. And then, uh, I stayed there a few months, oh, quite a few months. When you, you know how you meet peo--- different guys, different fellows that work there, and one fellow suggested, though, they were they were building someplace else, building a hospital down on Fifth Avenue or something, and he said, "Oh, don't you know they're opening up a new hospital there, you get so much a month." [Laughs]

LEVINE: More?

CONNELLY: More. And that's the way it goes. And then you could go and try somethin' that you'd start on that day if some thin' goes up there. So that's the way you . . .

LEVINE: So you bounced around a little bit.

CONNELLY: Yeah. Sure, you bounced around, that's right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONNELLY: You take the job over here. There's money. And then we left New York and, I don't know. We were supposed to go to California. [Laughs] This friend of mine, and, uh, we wound up, uh, where was it? In Pittsburgh. And then from Pittsburgh we took, there was a jobs going, it was, I think there was a strike on for a number right in the Overland [ph] plants in, uh, oh, gee, what's the name of the town? Oh, gee.

LEVINE: Was this in, uh . . .

CONNELLY: In – I don't know – in one of the towns out there in Ohio, in Ohio at the time. Yeah, that's right. There was -- there were, there was a strike on there, and they were picking up guys to go, and we were the ones that strikebreakers. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Ah!

CONNELLY: You know?

LEVINE: So did you stay doing that long?

CONNELLY: I stayed there, oh, I stayed in that town, I worked in that town all summer,

right into the late fall. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Then did you keep heading west?

CONNELLY: Yeah. Went to Chicago, tried Chicago, couldn't get a job. And then we met some guys that were coming east, you know? And at that time you could move around, you know. You take a job, you know, the jobs going so-and-so a place, and you went to the, some of these employment offices, pay a couple of dollars, and line up with the rest of the crowd there, and they ship you off. So we shipped off to, I think, up, oh, I don't know where the heck it was, up in the north. Uh, I forget where it was. At any rate, I shipped up there, and it was the same thing there, there was no work there. And so I said, "Oh, the hell with it," and I come back to New York.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONNELLY: So . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: When did you meet your wife?

CONNELLY: Oh, gee, years afterwards. Yeah. She's, my wife is eleven years younger than me, or was. I mean, my wife died years ago. And she was eleven years younger than me, and I was working in a building. I was a night, uh, oh, anything goes wrong at night, you know, they have

mechanics in the building to take care of it, you know? So I got a job in there, in the building, you know? And I lived there, and I had a room there, you know? And that's where I met my wife, in the same building.

LEVINE: She was working there?

CONNELLY: She was working in one of the apartments there, and I met her. So . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember the meeting?

CONNELLY: No, not really. I think we met, she used to come out into the yard, you know, to bring the dogs down to let them walk outside, take a walk around. And I seen this little yard, pretty little yard, you know, start talking.

LEVINE: Was she Irish?

CONNELLY: No, Scotch. [Laughs] So . . .

LEVINE: So then did you court her for a while before you married her?

CONNELLY: Yeah, well, we used to meet there once in a while, and then finally we got together and got married. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then did you, did you ever find a job that you liked well enough to stay at for a long time?

CONNELLY: Oh, yeah. The job that I, the job that I got afterwards was in one of the buildings. I used to---- I worked in an old, big buildings in New York and hotels and stuff like that, as a maintenance man, because I was handy with tools, you know, and stuff like that, and according that in England, you know, for a number of years. I was pretty handy. (He coughs) So, uh, I worked in quite a few places. And then the big Depression at that time. 1929, eh, hit us. And I was out of a job. And, gee, couldn't get a job here. Then finally I got a job in this big building, a big building over on Park Avenue, and that's where I stayed.

LEVINE: You got that job in the Depression, and then you stayed.

CONNELLY: In the Depression, in the beginning of the Depression, the 1929 Depression. And I stayed there practically, off and on. Well, I used to get ---- they used to hire a man to come in and do repair work, like special electric work in the, uh, during the summer, that I come in do certain work over there, and then they lay you off in the fall. And so . . .

LEVINE: Well, uh, let's see. Did the Depression hit you personally very hard?

CONNELLY: No. It didn't bother me.

LEVINE: You had a job.

CONNELLY: I had this job, and I moved from that, if there was a job in another building . . . (he coughs) I'd jump, get into that for the wintertime. Yeah. So you just hung on the best you could.

LEVINE: Well, uh, then did you have children?

CONNELLY: Two.

LEVINE: And their names?

CONNELLY: Uh, William, no, not, no. No, James, my son, he was named after me.
Yeah, and he done well for himself.

LEVINE: Did he?

CONNELLY: Yeah. (He coughs)

LEVINE: So, and you have a daughter, too?

CONNELLY: Yeah. She's here. She got married, and she had seven kids.

LEVINE: Ah, so you're a grandfather.

CONNELLY: Yeah, oh, sure. Oh, a grandfather, a great-grandfather.

LEVINE: You're a great-grandfather.

CONNELLY: Yeah. Those kids have all grown up.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. And what's your daughter's name?

CONNELLY: Anne.

LEVINE: Anne.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: And, um, let's see. Who, just thinking back a little bit about starting out in Ireland, and . . .

CONNELLY: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: What, how do you think it affected you, the fact that you started out in Ireland, you came here as a young man, and then you stayed here. Do you think that had an affect on the rest of your life?

CONNELLY: Gee. I never thought of it that way, you know? I just went ahead. You keep on going, you know? (He coughs)

LEVINE: Do you think you carry on certain customs or certain ways that are strictly Irish?

CONNELLY: Hmm, not that I know of, not really.

LEVINE: Were you the same kind of father to your children that you, your father was to you?

CONNELLY: Well, I would hope so. [Laughs] Of course, my daughter, she's a pretty good girl now. She's up -- way up in her forties now. And my son is getting up there, too. And, uh, he got a nice job, and she, when she raised the family, she said to the kids, when they got up to a certain age, they all went to work. Each one of them went to --- they didn't want to go to school. They went to work, you know? She was, "Okay." She said, "Go ahead and go to work, and so will I." So she went out to work, too. "You just take care of yourselves here, and I'll take care of your dad." And so that's the way she went. And the kids they all grew up. They all went back to school again, you know? So they're all doing pretty good. The oldest of them is forty, so you can realize, yeah, that they're pretty big.

LEVINE: Well, what do you feel most proud of that you did in your lifetime? What makes you feel very good about having done?

CONNELLY: Well, I don't know. I think maybe seeing these kids grow up and be so, such decent kids, you know, decent kids. (He coughs) There's, one of them is, he's gone off to Florida to finish up on computers down there. He's into computers, and he's going down to finish his schooling down there.

LEVINE: Well, how about you, in this phase of your life. How is, how is this old age time for you?

CONNELLY: [Laughs] I don't know. I mean to say I would of ---- I lived, I was doing good, and working right up till I was into my nineties, so I figure that's

doing pretty good, you know?

LEVINE: Yes, I would say so.

CONNELLY: You know? That's what I would call doing pretty good, you know.

LEVINE: Well, you're certainly alert and interested and interesting right now.

CONNELLY: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Is there anything else you can think of about this country, or your life, or coming here as an immigrant and deciding to stay here, anything else you can think of before we close?

CONNELLY: I'm thinking of this country made an awful mistake in building up the, you know, the, uh, population. They should have kept their population to a minimum, you know, kept it at a certain. When -- but the way it is now that the country's overflowing, and bursting all the seams, and it's going to become like all the other countries, you know? That's what's sad. It is a wealthy country and all like that, and not bad ---- good to get along, but it's for kids and for young people coming into it, no good. They have to be pretty levelheaded to get along, you know? You've got to really be pretty levelheaded.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I want to thank you so much. I'm so happy that I . . .

CONNELLY: Yeah, well, sure. [Public address announcement]. Well, sure, to be --

going back there, I don't know, brought me way back into the past.

LEVINE: Oh. Well, you have a lot of good things to remember.

CONNELLY: Yeah, yeah, sure.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. Well, I'm talking with James Connelly, who came through Ellis Island at the age of twenty in 1920.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: And so that makes you ninety-four years old now.

CONNELLY: Ninety-four, that's right.

LEVINE: And, um, you're here in Sayville, Long Island, New York.

CONNELLY: Yeah.

LEVINE: And it's August 2, 1994, and I'm signing off. This is Janet Levine. Well, thank you very much.

CONNELLY: Okay. You're quite welcome.